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ABSTRACT

When foreign graduate students come to the United States for master's-level training as teachers of English as a second language, they return to their homes countries well-prepared with up-to-date teaching theory and practice. However, the teacher education programs in the United States are prepared for the students only to the extent that they are aware of the student's backgrounds and needs and to the extent that they adopt a perspective that English is widely used and taught around the world, in non-native contexts. The students have much to teach U.S. teacher educators about those contexts. A carefully constructed needs assessment survey to determine student needs, personalities, and cultural and linguistic characteristics could gather useful information to incorporate into lectures, activities, and discussion topics. (MSE)

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U.S. EDUCATED ENGLISH TEACHERS OVERSEAS: READY OR NOT?

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about educating teachers who are planning to work overseas, in countries found in Asia, the Middle East and South America. They are people who have come from those countries and who plan to go back. They form a growing group of Master's degree candidates found in universities across this country which offer degrees designed to prepare teachers of English to speakers of other languages.

My own interest in this group comes from experiences as an English teacher for more than twelve years in the States, from two years of working in Egypt in a Master's degree program at the American University in Cairo, and then back here in the States where I now work with MA students in an English teacher training program at Eastern Michigan University. Since my earliest ESL teaching experiences with Indochinese learners, I have struggled hard to figure out how to teach "my" language. But in Egypt, for example, a country with a huge number of English language students and teachers (perhaps among the largest populations in the world), most English teachers are of course non-native speakers. Of approximately 170 parttime teachers in the university's DPS program of 8,600 students in 1986, 150 of the 170 teachers were Egyptian. And the Egyptian national universities graduated in 1980 560,000 people from the Faculty of Languages and the Faculty of Education who are all qualified in terms of their credentials to teach English in Egypt. The point here is that English is taught around the world by non-native speakers of the language.

It has been an exciting part of my work as a teacher educator - and to many of us - that we in this country have the opportunity to work with English teachers from around the world who come to our universities for advanced training. It is my position here that developing MA degree programs which serve the needs of foreign MA candidates is a good thing to do, that our programs - and all of the students in them - will benefit from our serving

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non-native speaking teachers.

American graduate students often have plans to go overseas to teach English; and the monolingual among us are particularly broadened by classroom interactions with foreign MA candidates as we begin to appreciate the complexity of the foreign graduate student's task; as one American student recently expressed her thoughts on this to me, "Can you imagine going to Japan and taking a Master's degree in teaching Japanese!" For most Americans, that is indeed an unlikely expectation. If we do master another language well enough to teach it, few of us could envision ourselves studying in a Japanese university graduate program. It's almost impossible for many of us to imagine.

However, in our program at Eastern Michigan, there are in the neighborhood of sixteen foreign students in core courses in the MA TESOL program and that's about half of the students in those core courses. Another twenty or more foreign MA candidates are taking cognate and elective courses in other departments across campus. And among the American and Canadian students, all except one, plan to go overseas to teach - ironically enough, in the same countries from which their foreign colleagues come.

We must not only be prepared to adjust our programs to accommodate all candidates, but we must also present opportunities to share their experiences. What is needed, then, is an effort to understand the nature of the English language as it is used "over there" - who are its users, what are the uses to which the language is put and what social relations demand the use of the English language. We must also look at the nature, the role and the status of the English language teacher "over there." And finally, we must be aware of how the topics of the courses we teach here are defined, conceptualized in those countries - language acquisition, for example, does not occur in all cultures as the manifestation of a psycholinguistic model which is based upon Skinnerian stimulus-response, Piagetian development nor client-centered therapy in all cultures; a fascinating activity in one introductory course has been to discuss (prior to any reading or discussion on the topic), how language is acquired. It was not only language acquisition experts who had opinions on this topic; every culture seems to have its own idea about how people learn how to talk. The teaching of English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills may or may not have equal status in all cultural or national contexts. The methods and materials which are used in the English classroom in Bangkok may not be chosen nor applied in the same way as in Peking or in Chicago. That is not to say that innovation cannot be

tried in those parts of the world; it is to say that applying any innovative technique, any traditional technique, for that matter, must be done with an awareness that these methods and techniques will be applied in cultural, linguistic and educational contexts different from the one found in the U.S.

By looking more closely at English and English teaching as these exist in the countries from which these MA candidates come, we are in a position to 1) meet the needs of foreign MA candidates by including their background knowledge and experience in our programs and 2) broaden the educational, cultural and linguistic experiences of the U.S. educated candidates as well. Nothing to lose and everything to gain?? Hopefully....it depends on how we go about it .... In the next section, I would like to discuss the answers to some of the questions that have been raised here: What is the educational background of the foreign MA candidate? What can we say about the roles of teachers and learners in different parts of the world? How well can a foreign MA candidate juggle and adjust to the changing roles that they take on here - first, as foreign student teachers in an MA program, then as foreign teachers of English in a classroom observation assignment where they must observe and analyze what they see, or more, in a practicum course where they must teach English!

Finally, we will take a brief look at the nature of English "over there," or at least look at ways in which we can incorporate into MA programs here a sociolinguistic analysis of how people use English and for what purposes in the parts of the world from which these candidates come. And along with this brief look at the language, we will look at the nature, status, and role of teaching English in these parts of the world. By looking at aspects of English teaching in the international context, we may be in a better position to open our teacher training programs to this growing population and in turn, to create classes which meet the needs of all of the students in them. In addition, I'll try to include some suggestions for activities which seem to help provide opportunities for student-teachers to express their ideas and questions in a non-threatening environment.

This presentation will be an effort to analyze the ways in which teacher training programs can be working toward meeting the needs of this group of students. I will argue that in fact we have come a long way toward incorporating the backgrounds, experience and needs of foreign MA candidates into our programs through the acceptance that in fact our programs are enrichened for all candidates with the addition of this growing number of foreign MA candidates. In fact, there is no literature that I could

find that directly addresses non-native English teacher training. And so, here, I will be drawing on work in teaching English as an international language, on cross-cultural awareness and on communication based teaching techniques as these may be applied in our MA programs.

One point may be worth mentioning at this time - I am not taking the position here that foreign graduate students in U.S. universities must in some way be coddled or otherwise be given special "handicapped" status in the classroom. In fact, they are not handicapped; but they are from different countries and this fact will obviously influence their interactions, their contributions. Rather, I wish to provide suggestions for how these students' contributions can be brought into the classroom and be used to the advantage of all students.

MA CANDIDATES IN U.S. UNIVERSITIES

The MA candidates in TESOL programs in the U.S. come from all over the world, all over the third world, in particular. They come from countries where English has been learned, taught and used in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes, for many years. In one sense, they are multilingual students who have grown up using a "native" language at home and using English, at least for some activities, in school; they have in nearly all cases studied English and learned to use English in a non-native context, in their own country. Our students at EMU come from The People's Republic of China and Taiwan, from Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and from countries in the Middle East and in Central and South America. The majority of them have taught English in the countries where they learned it; they have come to the U.S. to obtain the Master's degree and to go back home with it. They are not immigrants who expect to teach English in the United States; and contrary to the views of many Americans many of them are not interested in immigrating at all. Many of them have been sponsored by their governments, their employers or their families; they are expected, based on the terms of their funding, to return home. Though our university admission requirements do not demand a degree in English to enter our MA TESOL program, students from abroad who apply often studied English for a long time, often for more than six years before they even entered a Bachelor's degree program; they have in general, mastered grammar and reading skills and they have studied English literature. They have obtained the minimum TOEFL score that allows them to enter our program and they are expected to perform alongside native speakers of English in the TESOL program. In short, the foreign students in

one MA-TESOL program are highly motivated, hard-working individuals who come to the States to continue their education. But more, what is it that they bring to our program? They bring another perspective; they bring new ideas, new challenges to the English teaching profession as that profession exists here. They represent a resource as cultural, linguistic and cross linguistic informants about English language teaching in another cultural and social environment. And they offer a new perspective to all of us who work with them. The fabric of our graduate programs is strengthened by the presence of foreign students who are prepared to participate in them.

But entering a graduate university program in a foreign country is no easy task and many foreign students struggle hard against the obstacles that present themselves. One of the difficulties many of them face as they embark on their MA program is the role of student and then, later in their program, the role of teacher.

CHANGING ROLES

If the foreign MA candidate arrives in the U.S. having taught English in his/her country for some time, a social role adjustment is sometimes one of their most difficult tasks - changing their social role, from being a teacher in the native country to being a student in this country. The adjustment required to gracefully assume the role of student after what may have been several years of English teaching at home can be a rude awakening. The extent to which this adjustment is achieved is in part a function of the atmosphere of the TESOL classes in which he/she enrolls. After completing some of the core courses in theory, methods, materials, testing and research, most of these students (now, after two or three semesters comfortably settled into the student role) now must assume the role of "teacher" in a practicum course in which the candidate is assigned to work with a classroom teacher, first observing and then gradually assuming the role of classroom teacher. It is no easy adjustment - from "master teacher" in one's native country to "lowly graduate student" in the new country to "student teacher" in the U.S. ESL class to "teacher" in that same ESL class. I knew a Chinese student who entered an MA TESOL program in a university in the midwest in the fall of 1986. She had taken two years of intensive English training at her university at home prior to being sent by her government to study here for the MA in TESOL. She in fact had mastered spoken English to a level that I had rarely witnessed after only two years of English. Two weeks after arriving in the States, through the magic of

transoceanic academic advising, she was sitting in an Oral Practicum course with a group of ESL learners to which she had been assigned by me to work in the course I was teaching. She had gone in the space of fourteen days from being an English language student somewhere in China to being an English language teacher somewhere in the midwest United States!

This student teacher had adjusted remarkably well to her new role as a student teacher. She was unique. She had somehow mastered English and had a basic sense of confidence in herself that allowed her to make these transitions more readily than many of her classmates, some of whom didn't do so well at taking on this new role. One student teacher in that practicum course could simply not deal with the student teacher role - he refused to teach the group of ESL students to whom he had been assigned; he told me that he simply could not be a teacher of English in the United States. We agreed that he would begin his practicum experience by simply talking to the group of learners he sat with, that he didn't have to teach them anything, but just get to know them, find out who they were, where they were from and what they liked to do - just talk to them in English. For two weeks that guy came to "the Practicum" and chatted with four ESL learners. At the end of the two weeks, he told me that he was ready to work with them on grammar, like he had worked with students in his own country. OK, I said, why not? After three days of grammar drills, the group of fifteen student teachers and I met to discuss how things were going. "Not so well," he told us - "they told me that they'd rather talk some more. They told me that grammar was dull, that they already knew everything about grammar." Uh-oh, I thought, now what?? "Well," he said, "They told me they wanted to talk about English classes in their countries and I'm going to try to work the grammar into a conversation about learning English." The discussion continued with this group of fifteen student teachers trying to help this fellow to come up with some ideas of how to "work grammar into a conversation about English classes in other countries."

An informal study carried out by Cathy Day and Patrick Buckheister at the Eastern Michigan University was an effort to look at the classroom teaching roles of native speakers versus non-native speakers. Their conclusions were these: foreign practicum students talk less in the classroom than native speakers; adjustment factors combine with academic pressures to make the practicum experience particularly stressful for foreign students; and non-native speakers focus more on form than on content in the classroom while native speakers are more concerned with content. Classroom based research is needed that looks carefully at the role

of non-native speaker teacher in the ESL classroom.

Very little is known about the experience of the non-native speaker of English as English teacher. But the ESL teaching profession is in need of a framework for looking at this experience - with a focus on the many different types of English, different uses of English and different social contexts where English is learned, taught and used. Without such a structure, we are left with the problem of relying on a monolingual, native model for English teaching, a model which probably is not appropriate at all for the contexts in which an increasing number of our MA graduates are going to be working.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF ENGLISH 'OVER THERE'

The English language is used by non-native speakers in far greater numbers than it is by natives. In the introduction to this paper, I mentioned how we struggle as native users of English to teach "our own" language. It is important to keep in mind that there are now - according to Strevens - nearly twice as many non-native users of English as native users. Non-natives number nearly one billion. And these are the traditional EFL student, the learner of English who studies outside of a social context where English is used natively. This reality of growing numbers of non-native users of English must be accounted for as we consider training teachers who are also non-native users of "our" language - people who will teach it to others. In many countries, the English language students and their teacher may share a common linguistic and social background, a teaching context very different from the traditional ESL class in the U.S. The role of the non-native English speaker teacher is different from the role of the native speaker teacher.

With growing numbers of non-native users of English, the role of the native speaker and the native speaker teacher is changing. Attitudes toward "deviations" or accents must be considered, both here in the U.S. university where these teachers are preparing, as well as in those geographical areas from which they come. There are several considerations to be made regarding deviations from some "standard American English accent" that may illustrate the point to be made here about addressing the fact that growing numbers of foreign student teachers are entering MA programs in the States: How will the candidate's accent be dealt with - will efforts be made to Anglicize that accent; probably not in view of the fact that most of us a)

know that changing an adult accent is extremely difficult, if not impossible; and b) it is that candidate's accent that may be needed in the long term by his/her students in the home country; it may be an English accent that he/she will actually teach because it will be the one needed by learners there. On the other hand, if the accent makes communication difficult, no doubt someone in the U.S. university is going to address the problem and establish guidelines for dealing with foreign graduate students' oral English skills. Already this problem has surfaced across the country in universities employing large numbers of foreign teaching assistants whose American students claim to be unable to understand the spoken English used in the lecture. How will the candidate's accent be dealt with by the students to whom he/she is assigned in a practicum course? Will the ESL student in the U.S. university or public school object to having an English teacher who is a non-native speaker? It's likely that the answer to that one is "yes".

And finally, in the long-term, how will student teachers be prepared to deal with the realities of teaching English in their own countries upon completing the MA degree here? That is the subject of this paper.

A better understanding is needed in MA programs here of who foreign student teachers will teach, how English is used by those people (for education and science, by the mass media, in required literature courses, or for entertainment are some of the broad-based uses that many student teachers relate) and the social relationships which require the use of English. Strevens addresses these issues in terms of three perspectives on English use in non-native contexts, the Public, the Professional and the Personal Perspective.

Discussing what English is and how it is used in countries from which candidates come can be a good way to open discussion on topics covered in MA TESOL programs with courses in methodology, materials development, testing and research methodology. Understanding more about how English is perceived (attitudinal considerations) and used around the world is central to the development of an MA-TESOL teacher education program that addresses all of its students' needs.

WHAT IS THE ROLE, STATUS OF ENGLISH TEACHING 'OVER THERE'

Is English language learning considered to be part of a "core" education in these countries? What is the role of the English teaching profession? Are English teachers viewed to be people with a profession different from that of native language teachers? What are the broad national attitudes toward English teaching in these countries? What do teachers do? Why do they choose this profession? Who are they? What is the English teacher education curriculum like in these countries? Here, students are generally exposed to a variety of courses in topics such as theoretical and applied linguistics, pedagogy, research methodology and language testing. Courses covered are often basic theory courses in first and second language acquistion, sociolinguistics, perhaps courses in syntax and phonology of English. Under pedagogy, one might find courses like Methods and Materials of Teaching English, Curriculum Development in Foreign/Second Language. And research methodology courses are often based on an educational psychology model of empirical, ethnographic and classroom centered research. And there is usually a Language Testing course where issues of validity and reliability are addressed, test construction, administration and scoring, measurement and item analysis are covered. To what extent do these courses meet the needs of the teacher who is headed overseas. In the construction of the MA TESOL curriculum, it would be useful to consider some of the issues raised here - should the program contain a focus on the teaching of English in international contexts? If so, how will that focus be addressed?

The relevance of classroom methods and materials which are designed for the traditional ESL classroom in the U.S. must be taken into account. Materials can and should be developed which are relevant to the context in which foreign MA candidates will be working. The use of literature in the teaching of English in many countries must be considered. Program development and curriculum planning must be taught with an awareness of the linguistic and social context in which candidates will be teaching - how is the curriculum arrived at; who chooses the textbook and how; and what are the goals of large English teaching programs in other countries. The traditions of doing basic research, particularly research including the use of human subjects (which is almost always the case in language research) must be addressed. The tests and testing procedures familiar to the foreign MA candidate must be taken into acccount.

In the absence of an awareness of these issues we are effectively creating MA degree programs that are meeting the needs of only the rarest of

candidates, the one who will stay in the U. S. and teach English here to heterogeneous groups of learners from a variety of countries around the world. The majority of candidates will be working with English learners who share a common first language and culture, learners who will be using English IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES AND FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES, not here, not in the U. K. and not in Australia, but in non-native contexts of English use.

In the final section of this presentation, I wish to present to you a very brief list of ideas which have been generated by students in the courses I have taught in MA programs. They are ideas based on a philosophical commitment to English language teaching and English teacher training that a) gives the learner the responsibility to "get" the material that is needed to do the job, whatever that job is; it's based on the idea that unless the learner is invested in the process, the result will be that the teacher will think that he or she is teaching - the learner is getting nothing except bored; and b) if the learner (whether a student teacher or a learner of English) doesn't acquire THE ABILITY TO USE what has been taught, then learning has not occurred.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

One problem I have run into in TESOL program courses is that the native speaker candidate dominates classroom discussions and fails to provide the non-native candidate with the opportunity to contribute. This is obviously normal behavior. The foreign student assumes the role of polite student and keeps quiet, expecting the teacher to do all the talking; after all, teachers have the info and the student's job is to lap it up - right? When a question arises in a class discussion, foreign students expect the teacher to answer the question; and so do most American students. So we end up with four or five people, usually native speakers, out of 20 or so, doing all the talking.

In any social group, we can expect to find dominant personalities and less dominant personalities. But in the TESOL class, it is important that all students feel that they can and should contribute. One way of dealing with this problem is to seat students in a circle, in which case there is a feeling that we are together in this, that all of us make the class work well, or not work well....In fact, this is an unfamiliar classroom set-up for lots of students and so it takes time to get used to; beginning the very first class meeting with "Introduction" activities is one way to set up the atmosphere so that all can contribute if they feel that they want to do so. Allowing

silences in the class (during which I often count to five because I feel so uncomfortable with these "spaces" in the class) will often allow the students time to collect thoughts, to give others a chance to speak and to gather courage to speak out. In beginning level courses, theory courses in particular, I do lecture on "the theories of language learning" that dominate the Western perspective on that topic; and methods and materials and other courses also require some lecture; but keeping those lectures short, reminding students that this is one perspective, the one that has been applied in this and many other countries in the Western world, then opening the discussion with the contributions of an outgoing student from another country can set the stage for other students to jump in and contribute. Often, I give students discussion questions to prepare in groups so that they can think about the topic prior to arriving in class; they can prepare their contributions, a part of learning that seems to enhance the possibilities of getting everyone involved. If students are not prepared with ideas, they either circle the issue without ever really addressing it, feel pressured to contribute but have no idea what to contribute, or are unable to focus on the topic because of their inability to think of anything to contribute. In fact, such homework assignments are useful for all students; clear assignments in which students must organize thoughts, ideas and contributions ahead of time either in written or oral presentation format are more useful to all than on-the-spot efforts to pull it together right there in class. Working in groups gives students a chance to get to know one another and more, to experience that feeling of peer support, such an important element of a graduate education experience.

Another activity that I have found to be useful to students in MA methods courses is the use of a survey or questionnaire which allows students a chance to explore their own and their classmates' attitudes toward language and language learning. Using an adaptation of the FLAS (Foreign Language Survey), deGarcia, Reynolds and Savignon, 1974, candidates answer questions using a Likert scale; questions are "Proficiency means correct application of the four skills" and "Foreign students won't try hard in their ESL classes because they don't want to work hard," and "A good teacher doesn't need to use audio or video equipment." By exploring their own attitudes toward language and language teaching, students in MA programs can begin to analyze and be aware of their own attitudes and those of their classmates.

Assigning students to small group work in which different cultural groups work together is a good idea. But care must be exercised in how those

groups are formed. Knowing a little about candidates' English learning and teaching backgrounds allows us to incorporate those backgrounds into examples used in the lecture, in activities and in discussion topics. Knowing a little about all candidates' personalities and native cultural and linguistic backgrounds can help the teacher educator in efforts to assign candidates to small group work so that those activities will reap benefits for all. A carefully constructed needs assessment survey questionnaire can help to explore the needs of all.

CONCLUSION

This presentation title asks whether or not U. S. Educated English teachers are ready to go overseas to teach English in non-native contexts. The answer to that question is "yes." They are prepared with the cutting-edge, up-to-date theory and practice in English language teaching. On the other hand, are we prepared for them? The answer to that question is to me quite clear: We are prepared to meet the needs of MA candidates in our English teacher preparation programs to the extent that those programs are aware of the the backgrounds and needs of the candidates they accept and to the extent that programs adopt a perspective that English is used and taught (and has been used and taught) around the world (for some time). The teachers we are working with today, whether foreign or American, are going to be teaching in those non-native contexts of English use. Indeed, we have much to teach them and much to learn from them.